

Feb 23, 2011 Follow-up Mule Deer Planning Meeting

BLM activities since October meeting

Public Comments Summary

- 84 Comments

- Five Groups Of Comments

- General Input (19 comments)
- Implementation Related (42 comments)
- Reclamation Related (6 comments)
- Monitoring Related (15 comments)
- Operational Changes Suggested (2 comments)

Follow-up meeting between Operators, WGF and BLM

- Placed comments into four sub-categories
 - General observation
 - Guideline for future action (how to do something)
 - Suggestion for future action (what to do)
 - Matter already decided elsewhere
 - RMP ROD, Anticline SEIS ROD, etc



Sequential Mitigation Response As Defined In The 2008 ROD

■ On-Site

- 1. Protection of flank areas from disturbance to assure continued habitat function of flank areas, and to provide areas for enhancement of habitat function
- 2. Habitat enhancements of SEIS area (both core/crest and flanks) at an appropriate (initially 3:1) enhancement to disturbance acreage ratio.

■ On-site/Off-site

- 3. Conservation Easements or property rights acquisition to assure their continued habitat function, or provide an area for enhanced habitat function (e.g., maintenance of corridor and bottleneck passages, protection from development, establishment of forage reserves, habitat enhancements at an appropriate (initially 3:1) enhancement-to-disturbance ratio).

■ Modification of Operations

- 4. Recommend, for consideration by Operators and BLM, adjustments of spatial arrangement and/or pace of ongoing development.

MITIGATION

WHAT IT IS

WHAT IT IS NOT

CEQ defines Mitigation in 40CFR 1508.20 (avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, compensate).

Mitigation IS a tool to lessen impacts (scope, intensity, frequency, and/or duration).


Mitigation IS a process to offset some impacts.

Mitigation IS NOT a guarantee there would be no impacts.

Mitigation IS NOT a tool to reverse an impact once it has taken place.




General Public Observations

- “reference units are not perfect”
 - “difficult to find collared deer once they move off of the winter range”
 - “treatments to date have been on a smaller scale”
 - “Ryegrass is holding more deer than in the past”
- 




Guidelines for Future Action

- “Enhance Habitat Without Killing Sagebrush”
 - “Redouble Efforts In Transition Ranges”
 - “Sommers-Grindstone Easements Are Areas For Future Habitat Improvement Work”
 - “Work Where The Deer Are, Not Where It Is Easiest”
- 



Suggestions for Future Action

- “As Wells Are Completed Move As Much Of The Disturbance To Reclamation As Quickly As Possible”
 - “Look At Transitional Areas As Locations To Quickly Turn Around Mule Deer Body Condition And Provide Higher Quality Forage During Light Winters”
 - “Expand Project Size For Bigger Benefit”
 - “Clearly Describe What Is Expected From A Project And Monitor The Starting Conditions To Determine If The Object Is A Benefit And If It Works”
- 

Already Decided In The ROD

- “We Don’t Have A Perfect Reference Unit”
- “Winter Drilling Is The Mitigation We Are Missing Out On. Don’t Ignore This, And Say We Need To Monitor More And Mitigate More. Winter Drilling Is What’s In Front Of Us.”
- “Do Not Allow Exceptions”


FOLLOW-UP MEETING HELD ON
DECEMBER 16, 2010
Wyoming Game and Fish, BLM,
Operators

As a result of the sub-categorizing step

- Took The 84 Comments And Further Categorized Them
- Identified SEVENTEEN Things That Were “ACTIONABLE”
- Identified:
 - What could be done
 - Who would do it
 - When it could be done (immediate, short term (1-2 years), mid term (2-5 years)).




Actionable Items

- Coordinate with USFS monitoring of mule deer in relation to the Noble Basin Project
 - Initiate expanded monitoring of mule deer in the Upper Green River area
 - Look for larger scale projects
 - Continue applying mitigation, monitoring results and adjusting response
 - Define “MITIGATION”
- 




Actionable Items Continued

- Be thoughtful and deliberate in identifying where to apply mitigation. Develop partnerships and coordinate activities across agency lines to leverage limited funds, prioritize projects with proportionally larger and/or broader returns over those with single resource benefit.
 - Be cautious when entering current high use areas. Weigh the cost : benefit and take lower risks with vegetation manipulation
 - Focus off-site mitigation treatments in migration routes and higher elevations where better response can be predicted
- 



Actionable Items Continued

- Complete conservation plans; coordinate regarding seedings and other developments being proposed for conservation plans
 - Work where deer are first.
 - Consider other uses and their impacts when identifying mitigation response
 - Identify priority areas such as winter concentration areas and migration routes where enhanced reclamation and enhancement efforts can be completed
 - Look at other non-native species for reclamation which produce higher quality browse and provide for a quicker return to productive mule deer winter range
- 

Actionable Items Continued

- BLM, WGF work with entities who are drafting ranch plans for the private lands within easement areas monitoring is already a part of these plans and some soils inventory is already completed.
- Identify what we are expecting from mitigation projects before we do them, monitor for success, and use the information to adapt future treatments
- Undertake habitat condition inventories of un-fragmented habitat
- Continue utilizing directional drilling technology to address wildlife resources without affecting pace of development or instituting modification of operations before sequential mitigation process is complete. Ex. Directional drilling technology offers a means to develop the resource with less surface disturbance in areas of particular importance to mule deer winter/migration use
 - Needs to continue to be cognizant of other resources constraints



WHAT'S GOING TO BE DONE


- Define Mitigation

- Short Term

- BLM will clarify how the decisions of the SEIS ROD address the mitigation definitions contained in 40CFR 1508.20 (avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, compensate).
 - Explain what the SEIS ROD mitigation package was intended to produce during the life of project.



WHAT'S GOING TO BE DONE

- Coordinate with USFS monitoring of mule deer in relation to the Noble Basin Project
 - Initiate expanded monitoring of mule deer in Upper Green River Area
 - Immediate/short term
 - Discussions have already taken place with USFS
 - Consider extending the monitoring of mule deer habitat conditions out of the immediate Mesa area to attempt to learn more about how other parts of the Mesa mule deer range may be affecting body condition and to identify where future habitat improvements could be effective
 - Coordination with USFS regarding monitoring efforts/sharing of contractor, look to capture this in the Eagle Prospect Noble Basin Project ROD
 - mid term
 - Continue to share results of monitoring with public as it comes in
- 

WHAT'S GOING TO BE DONE

- Look For Larger Scale Projects
- Be Cautious When Entering Current High Use Areas. Weigh The Cost : Benefit And Take Lower Risks With Vegetation Manipulation
- Focus Off-Site Mitigation Treatments In Migration Routes And Higher Elevations Where Better Response Can Be Predicted
- Work Where The Deer Are First
- Consider Other Uses And Their Impacts When Identifying Mitigation Response
 - Immediate
 - PAPO staff project identifying core areas and developing priorities
 - short term
 - Coordination with WGF, Mule Deer Foundation, NRCS, WLCI, Wyoming Land Trust, others to build relationships, identify priorities, and leverage PAPO dollars
 - Initially prioritize treatments where rest can be incorporated without major costs or changes to established uses.
 - WYDOT approved funding of wildlife over/under-passes, construction scheduled to begin spring 2011
 - mid term
 - Project planning priorities based on conditions, site potential, level of use, location, other uses
 - BLM WGF and County Commission reevaluate the bridge across the New Fork
 - Once over/underpasses are complete, WGF compare traffic trends and wildlife mortality. BLM and WGF work with operators to redirect traffic out of high wildlife use areas during key periods

WHAT'S GOING TO BE DONE

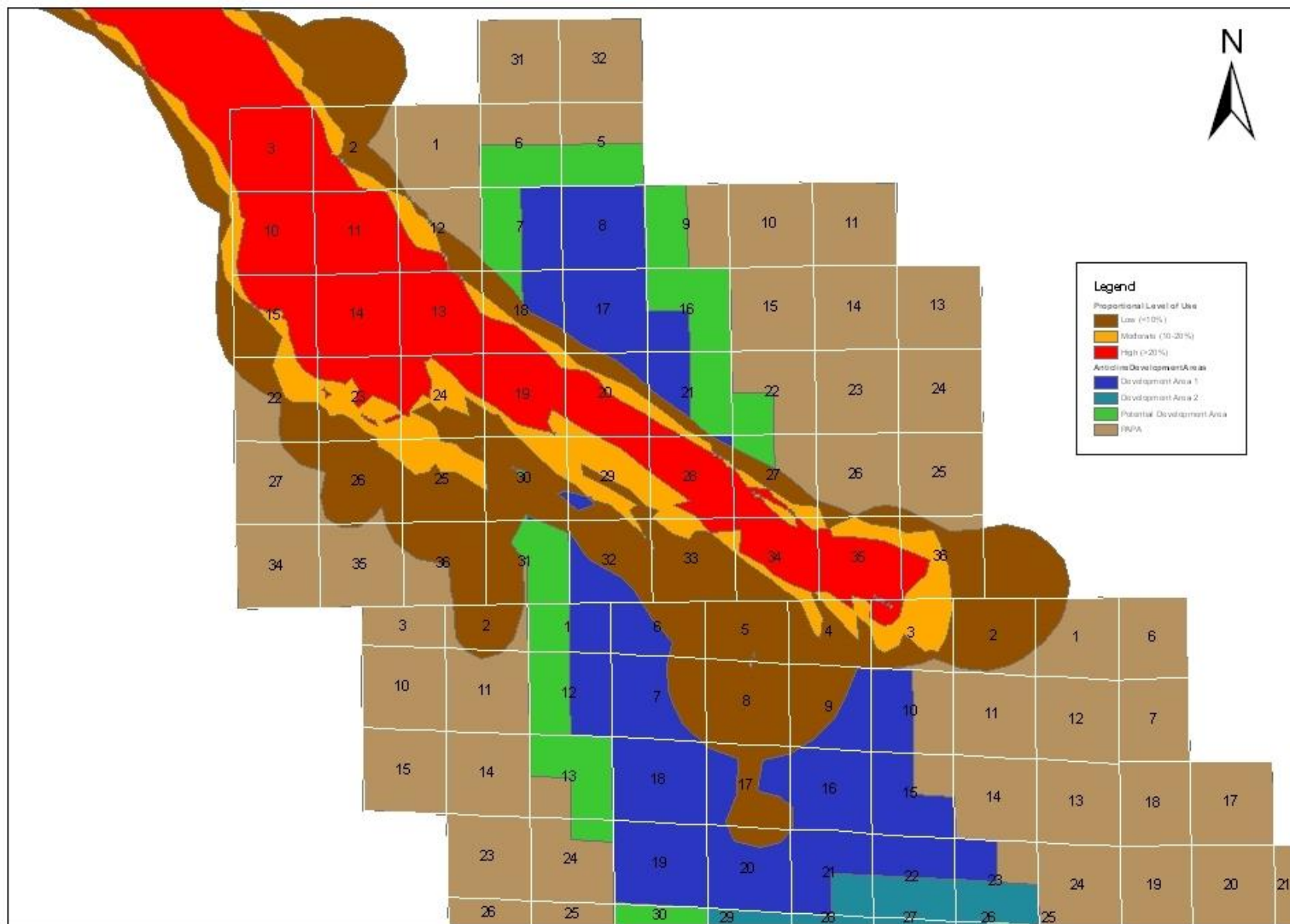
- Continue Applying Mitigation, Monitoring Results And Adjusting Response
- Identify Priority Areas Such As Winter Concentration Areas And Migration Routes Where Enhanced Reclamation Efforts Can Be Completed
- Look At Other Non-Native Species For Reclamation Which Produce Higher Quality Browse and Provide For A Quicker Return To Productive Mule Deer Winter Range
 - Immediate
 - Continue coordinated monitoring of past projects, collect baseline monitoring for approved projects,
 - Short Term
 - Annual review of reclamation and monitoring plan
 - Within 3 months WGF provide BLM with list of reclamation species
 - Within 6 months BLM initiate adaptive management if necessary, to modify reclamation plan to allow use of non-native non-invasive browse species
 - BLM and WGF identify priority areas (migration routes and winter concentration areas) on the Anticline where enhanced reclamation (container planting, modified species lists etc.) will be beneficial
 - By 2012 reclamation season, operators implement new reclamation standards in priority areas.

WHAT'S GOING TO BE DONE

- Be Thoughtful And Deliberate In Identifying Where To Apply Mitigation. Develop Partnerships And Coordinate Activities Across Agency Lines To Leverage Limited Funds, Prioritize Projects With Proportionally Larger And / Or Broader Returns Over Those With Single Resource Benefit.
- Identify What We Are Expecting From Mitigation Projects Before We Do Them, Monitor For Success, And Use The Information To Adapt Future Treatments
 - Immediate
 - Coordinate with WGF, Mule Deer Foundation, NRCS, WLCI, Wyoming Land Trust, others to build relationships, identify priorities, and leverage PAPO dollars
 - Short Term and Mid Term
 - Prioritize Project Proposals For PAPO Funding (Mule Deer and Sagebrush Centered Proposals With A Focus In Priority Areas On/Off Site)
 - Emphasize through the application and review process for PAPO funded projects, that specific, achievable and measurable habitat improvement objectives are defined so that the PAPO staff may better evaluate the benefits of a project, the public can see how a project can affect mule deer or sagebrush, and the PAPO board can make more informed decisions whether or not to fund a project.
 - Continue providing project proposals for public input into project review and consideration
 - PAPO staff project (later in program)

WHAT'S GOING TO BE DONE

- Continue utilizing directional drilling technology to address wildlife resources without affecting pace of development or instituting modification of operations before sequential mitigation process is complete. Ex. Directional drilling technology offers a means to develop the resource with less surface disturbance in areas of particular importance to mule deer winter/migration use
 - Short Term
 - Allow ROD To Continue Working
 - Continue Using Adaptive Management (This Process Is Working)
 - Continue Monitoring Conditions Closely
 - According To The ROD, If Undesirable Changes Continue To Occur, Implement Additional Mitigation Treatments
 - Mid Term
 - As Concentrated Phased Development Moves Into The Next Geographic Block Within DA1, WGF BLM And Operators Look At Ways to Configure The CDAs To Avoid Or Minimize Overlap On Migration Routes And Concentration Areas,
 - One Of The Goals Would Be To Reduce the “Blockage” Of The Narrow Migration Routes Or “Plugging” Of The High Concentration Areas With Winter Drilling Activity.




0 0.5 1 2 Miles

WHAT'S GOING TO BE DONE

- BLM, WGF work with entities who are drafting ranch plans for the private lands within easement areas monitoring is already a part of these plans and some soils information is already completed.
- Complete Conservation Plans; Coordinate Regarding Seedings And Other Developments Being Proposed For Conservation Plans
 - Conservation plans were created for every easement area.
 - Short Term
 - BLM and PAPO staff Coordinate with entities preparing or updating ranch plans to identify plan status and see if there is an opportunity to be involved in priority habitat areas. Habitat inventories and project proposals could result.
 - PAPO staff will, in Summer 2011, initiate discussions with easement landowners to review their conservation plans and discuss plans for maximizing benefits of the conserved areas for wildlife; habitat inventories and project proposals are expected to result.
 - PAPO staff and WGF identify priority habitat areas within Conservation Easement Areas for habitat improvements. For willing landowners, look for opportunities to leverage mitigation dollars to propose and develop projects which would improve important habitat



WHAT'S GOING TO BE DONE

- Undertake habitat Condition Inventories Of Un-Fragmented habitat
 - Short Term
 - Within one year, WGF and BLM identify un-fragmented habitats within priority mule deer winter and transitional range related to Mesa
 - Mid Term
 - Within two years BLM and WGF undertake inventories of current habitat conditions within these habitat blocks, Identify threats and prioritize habitat improvements where possible to offset these threats.
- 

RESPONSES
DESCRIBED ABOVE
ARE REALLY JUST
CONTINUED
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
ROD.

ANNUAL
DEVELOPMENTS WILL
CONTINUE TO RESULT IN
REFINEMENTS OF THE
MITIGATION RESPONSE

WE WILL CONTINUE TO
WELCOME YOUR
COMMENTS AND
SUGGESTIONS.